

"THE PARISIENNE"
Draft 9.0

By

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1 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - NIGHT

1

ALEX (55) is cruising an empty late night street in a V8 Statesman; garish neon signage swipes the glass as he mumbles almost inaudibly. Without warning he suddenly hauls the big car to a halt. Pissed-off, a CAR HORN blares, the Doppler effect slashes like a knife. Alex sits indecisive, engine idling.

Another car pulls up beside the idling Statesman. Unsettled now, Alex buzzes his window down; the VOICE hurls advice at him.

VOICE

Make your fucking mind up mate!

Alex mumbles; the Voice studies him for a moment, then disappears in an angry screech. Alex sits undecided.

2 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - AFTERNOON

2

Alex cruises through leafy middle class suburbs. Afternoon reflections of tree lined streets ripple across the windscreen. He is on autopilot, detached, oblivious to the images flitting by outside. He retains the tanned, rugged fitness of a man who is still physically active. He wears a distinctive CHAIN and Cross around his neck.

Sitting in silence beside him is his daughter PHILLY (13) her long golden hair catches the light and flutters in the breeze from the open window. Occasionally she glances vacantly outside while listening to an iPod that she holds in her lap; we can hear the music faintly. Alex pulls up in front of an attractive middle class home.

3 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - AFTERNOON

3

Alex studies the house through the passenger window to be greeted only by silence. Fidgeting with her iPod, Philly makes no effort to leave the car. Without warning she blurts out a question.

PHILLY

Why did you and Mum split up?

Alex is taken off guard, and frames an apologetic response.

ALEX

We couldn't get along anymore
Philly. It wasn't her fault.

Philly studies her father.

PHILLY

Was it yours?

Alex struggles to reply.

ALEX

No.

Painful pause.

PHILLY

Why don't you come around
anymore?

Philly returns to fidgeting with the iPod, stalling glumly. Alex looks for an escape as an awkward silence descends.

ALEX

C'mon. I'll pick you up tomorrow,
after school!

Alex picks through the center console for loose change, attempting to console her with a bribe.

ALEX

How about some pocket money?

Philly mocks his offer; teasingly, she flashes a shiny new ATM access card under his nose.

PHILLY

Mum's new boyfriend gave me *this*!

Alex acknowledges the card, crestfallen. Philly gets out lugging a small duffel bag. She dumps the bag and turns to watch as Alex forces a smile. He drives off slowly as the sad grumble of the V8 echos softly. Alex looks in the side mirror and for a few moments sees Philly trotting along behind. Alex stares back at her reflection as she recedes from sight. He waves limply but she doesn't wave back.

4 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - NIGHT

4

Alex drives through a shopping district, night hours and drained of life. For a few seconds an immaculate black 1965 Pontiac Parisienne ghosts past in the opposing lane; his face lights up.

ALEX

Whooh! A Parisienne!

He continues driving as street lights splash across his face. He recites to himself, barely audible, the starting syllables of the names of women, racking his brain to remember.

ALEX

Allison, Anne, Ba..., Barbara,
Bi..., Briony..., Bo..., Bu....,
Ca...

A name explodes into his memory and he blurts it out.

ALEX

Cathy!

5 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD 1970 - AFTERNOON

5

Alex recalls his youth as ALEXANDER, 16 years old going on 17. He has long hair typical of the early seventies; a teenager rebelling against staid rural conservatism. We recognize the same distinctive CHAIN and Cross we have seen on Alex around his neck. He is walking along an isolated country road, hitching, shirt off, tanned, and carrying a small bag. An ocean of grass and a vast blue sky accompanies him. The whisper of grass shatters as birds suddenly flush to freedom at his approach.

In the shimmering distance a car approaches. Soon a majestic black 1965 PONTIAC PARSISIENNE slows, then pulls up. Smiling at him from the drivers seat is sexy, sweet CATHY (18).

CATHY

Ta..daaa!

ALEXANDER

Cath!

The motor ticks over as she throws the drivers door open and slides across to the passenger side, beaming an invitation at Alexander. Alexander chucks on his shirt, smiling, lucky.

CATHY

You drive.

She is all legs and crotch on the end of a short figure hugging dress, white, clinging. Her legs are now curled up on the abundant front seat of the Parisienne.

6 INT. PONTIAC PARSISIENNE 1970 - AFTERNOON

6

Alexander slides in behind the wheel; he's trying to look calm but can't hide his excitement. He wheels the Parisienne around in a confident u-turn.

ALEXANDER

Where'd you get *this*?

CATHY

It's Jacksons.

CATHY

Do you know him?

ALEXANDER

No.

CATHY

You wouldn't want to either!

CATHY

If it was mine I'd just keep going!

ALEXANDER

Where?

CATHY

To Sydney! The Cross...it's fab!

ALEXANDER

That'll take some juice!

They cruise, eying each other off, sparking. Cathy's cascade of platinum blond hair spills out over alabaster skin and dances in the breeze of the open windows.

On the radio a RADIO JOCK announces news that 100,000 people have rallied against the Vietnam War in Melbourne; it is May 8th 1970. Cathy studies Alexander intently as the broadcast on the radio fades in and out. Alexander tunes the dial, trying not to miss a word.

RADIO JOCK (ON THE RADIO)

In Melbourne today a crowd estimated to be as many as 100,000 rallied to protest Australia's troop commitment to the war in Vietnam...calls for a moratorium in every state capital to bring an end to conscription were met with jeers from hecklers...violent scuffles broke out between police and protesters.

The passing landscape is incongruous with the threatening jungles of Vietnam. Cathy probes.

CATHY

Are you gonna go? How old are you?

ALEXANDER

Seventeen...soon.

CATHY

You don't even have a license?

ALEXANDER

Not yet. Don't you?

CATHY

No.

They exchange surprised looks, then giggle like kids stealing candy. Any thoughts about the looming threat of conscription are banished. The thin sound of the radio falters as they drop out of coverage. Outside, rural isolation continues unabated. The Parisienne glides undisturbed along the narrow bitumen. The wind plays with Cathy's hair as she studies Alexander.

Alexander comes to a fork in the road. He swings the big car right instead of left. Cathy suddenly jumps in surprise. Alexander teases her.

CATHY

Where are we going?

ALEXANDER

You'll see! Trust me!

7 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - NIGHT 7

Alex wheels the Statesman up outside an anonymous industrial line of closed shops. Across the empty footpath a security door faces him. He looks left and right, then when he sees the street is empty he gets out of the car.

8 EXT. BROTHEL 2005 - NIGHT 8

He looks through the mesh of a security door. He presses the buzzer and waits. A female voice confirms him and he hears the security lock release.

MADAM

(voice through intercom)

Come on up Lovey.

9 INT. BROTHEL RECEPTION 2005 - NIGHT 9

Alex arrives at a small reception area. He is greeted by MADAM (50ish) short blond hair, nicely dressed, comforting and confident. She is a few kilos overweight but still looks good. She appears to know him and beams at him with delight. Alex is sheepish.

MADAM

Haven't seen you in ages! Must be a week?

ALEX

Lucy?

Madam teases him with an offer.

MADAM

Can't tempt you with another
girl?

Alex shakes his head and smiles.

ALEX

Lucy.

MADAM

How long this time Lovey? It's
still \$80 for half an hour, \$120
for forty-five minutes and ---

ALEX

Two hours.

Madam goes off. Alex waits and looks around to see if he's
alone. He smooths his hair in anticipation. Faintly he
hears the sound of a girl laughing.

10 INT. PONTIAC PARISIENNE 1970 - AFTERNOON 10

Cathy is laughing at something; the two conspirators
cruise on. Open landscape recedes and the black-top road
becomes narrower and winding, with little bridges
crisscrossing a stream. Alexander wheels the Parisienne
off the main road onto a wide grassy verge. The summer
heat gives way and a cool flowing stream beckons. Cathy
gets out.

11 EXT. RED ROCK BRIDGE 1970 - AFTERNOON 11

Alexander follows, admiring an ass barely covered by
Cathy's dress. He reaches for her hand searchingly. The
crystal stream gurgles at their feet and a breeze sighs
through She Oak trees along the bank. They aren't far off
the roadway and turn to listen as a car passes by.

CATHY

People can see us.

ALEXANDER

So?

They pick their way along the stream-bank; Cathy peels her
dress over her head in a fluid gesture and flings it away.
She hobbles towards the stream, thin white underwear
clinging desperately. She scolds him.

CATHY

You're staring!

ALEXANDER

I *am* not!

Alexander stands transfixed by the moment. She teases him suggestively; with a lick of lips and a flick of her hair she offers her back to him.

CATHY

Undo me!

Alexander undoes her bra. Her panties slip down to her ankles. She steps out of them and moments later squeals with the shock of the cold stream water. She beams excitedly at Alexander, teasing, splashing water at him.

CATHY

You coming or what?

12

INT. BROTHEL BEDROOM 2005 - NIGHT

12

LUCY (35) sexy, attractive, with dark hair and pale skin. She and Alex share a comfortable familiarity. The room is minimal - no windows, a double bed, side tables with bedside lamps, a bin, a box of tissues, condoms and lubricant. Lucy commences to strip the bed down, looks up as Alex undresses to shower.

LUCY

How's your week been?

ALEX

Busy...keeps me from thinking!

LUCY

About your ex?

ALEX

My daughter, my ex, her boyfriend, the past...

Alex scoops Lucy in his arms, starts to nuzzle into her neck.

ALEX

...but I prefer to think about you.

Lucy laughs good naturedly and shoves a towel forcefully into his chest. Alex grunts, turns away and after a moment we hear the shower start up. Lucy returns to stripping the bed down, talking over her shoulder.

LUCY

I think lots too. I'm excited!

Alex raises his voice above the shower noise.

ALEX

Yeah?

LUCY
About finishing here. I'm done
with this.

Lucy anticipates his response but none comes. She has stripped the bed down to just the fitted sheet and now perches on the edge. She prompts him, her face betrays her seriousness.

LUCY
This is my last night.

Alex faces into the shower rose; Lucy hears only the gurgling of the shower.

13 EXT. RED ROCK BRIDGE 1970 - AFTERNOON 13

Alexander throws off his boots, then his clothes and follows Cathy. She is up to her neck as Alexander settles into the water. Afternoon sky reflects on them. They splash each other for awhile, giggling, then Cathy comes closer, pouts teasingly at him.

CATHY
Do you like me then?

Alexander buys time before answering, reaching out to hold her close to him.

ALEXANDER
Yes.

CATHY
How much?

He hesitates with the inexperience of young love - the question hangs teasingly for a moment.

ALEXANDER
Heaps!

Nature's life force watches over the couple as they kiss; She Oaks loom as the gurgling stream caresses them.

14 INT. BROTHEL BEDROOM 2005 - NIGHT 14

The shower gurgles to a stop. Alex emerges, toweling down. Lucy stands and he embraces her tenderly. She smiles and starts to take off her dress but he stops her emphatically.

ALEX
Me! Me! I want to undress you!

Lucy laughs and turns, allowing him to unzip her.

LUCY

Only you!

The dress falls to her ankles as she is revealed in stunning red underwear, the expensive kind. She faces him and pouts.

LUCY

Well? Good enough?

ALEX

Better than good enough!

Lucy is beautiful, sexy, playful. Her clear eyes stare at him quizzically. She teases him suggestively; with a lick of lips and a flick of her hair she offers her back to him.

LUCY

Undo me.

Alex undoes her bra. Her panties slip down to her ankles. She steps out of them and moments later squeals as they slide down onto the bed entwined.

15

INT. PONTIAC PARISIENNE 1970 - NIGHT

15

The Parisienne is bouncing gently, springs creaking rhythmically; on the vast expanse of the back seat Cathy and Alexander are laid out; peas in pod, gasping. The huge passenger doors are flung wide, and a soft night breeze caresses the new young lovers. Outside, firelight flickers naked upon them as Cathy cradles Alexander's head on her chest. She plays languidly with his hair. He strokes her forearms affectionately with his fingertips.

CATHY

You reckon you'd get work in
Sydney?

Alexander is taken aback, thinks it over for a moment before answering.

ALEXANDER

Yeah...I reckon.

Out on the roadway a car passes. Faintly, headlights sweep past, catching them with light. They listen to the Doppler effect as unmet travelers disappear into the night.

16

INT. BROTHEL BEDROOM 2005 - LATER THAT NIGHT

16

Lucy lays back, cradling Alex's head on her chest. They are laid out in the embrace of familiar lovers. The light spills softly as she plays languidly with his hair. He strokes her forearms absently with his fingertips.

LUCY
More thinking?

ALEX
You can tell eh?

Lucy laughs. Alex is relaxed. She strokes his chest, coaxes him to talk.

LUCY
Better...or still bitter?

ALEX
Sad more than angry...like I'm
letting Philly down...she's got a
new step-dad now.

Alex stares into the mist of his past. Lucy props herself up on one elbow to quiz him.

LUCY
Who else could be her father if
not you?

ALEX
When we had her it was an
accident...but she's the best
accident *I* ever had.

LUCY
I used to be glad I didn't have
kids...now I think it's too late.

Lucy studies Alex, fingertips stroking his chest.

LUCY
Don't you want to give it another
go...to meet someone?

ALEX
Right now I'm too scared.

LUCY
Of?

Alex grapples uneasily with his emotions.

ALEX
Of losing Philly.

Lucy becomes restless as her own feelings well up.

LUCY
I lost everything in my break up.

ALEX

Is that why you're here?

LUCY

Most men use me as a counselor...

Lucy makes flourishing gesture over her breasts.

LUCY

...only with added benefits!

ALEX

Is that how you think I see you?

LUCY

How *do* you see me?

A gap forms between them, physically and emotionally.

LUCY

I've paid off my debts, saved,
going to start over again.

ALEX

On your own?

LUCY

I'm not lucky with men...I always
trust the wrong ones.

Alex takes Lucy in his arms again, silently thoughtful.

17 INT. CAR 1970 - DAY

17

Alexander is being driven past a SERVICE STATION and suddenly asks to stop.

ALEXANDER

This'll do me!

18 EXT. SERVICE STATION 1970 - DAY

18

He walks over to the side of the servo staring at the Parisienne. A tough looking guy he supposes to be JACKSON (32) is fueling it up but ignores Alexander. Cathy emerges from the side, hesitates in surprise, then stops. Alexander nods toward the man fueling the Parisienne.

ALEXANDER

Jackson?

Cathy has trouble looking at Alexander. The grinding of the Bowser pumping petrol fills the silence.

ALEXANDER

Sydney?

Cathy polishes her sunglasses with the hem of her skirt.
Jackson goes in to pay.

CATHY

Broken Hill...there's work there.

Alexander sneers.

ALEXANDER

What happened to Sydney?

Jackson reappears, heading for the Parisienne. He looks around for Cathy, turns his head and barks at her.

JACKSON

You coming or what?

Cathy studies Alexander intently for a moment.

CATHY

I'm pregnant.

She kisses him fleetingly and spins away to the Parisienne. As the big car begins to burble away Alexander crosses over. Alexander looks up as the intercom buzzes.

19

INT. BROTHEL BEDROOM 2005 - LATER AGAIN THAT NIGHT

19

MADAM

(over the intercom)

Five minutes kids!

Alex lies on the bed holding Lucy. She's attentive, willing him to say something.

ALEX

It's hard, where I'm at now.

LUCY

Am I good enough...for where you're at now?

Alex rises. Lucy wraps in a towel and reluctantly starts making up the bed. Alex dresses and reaches to hold Lucy closely. He again nuzzles her neck. She turns to face him.

LUCY

What's love to you?

ALEX

Fidelity...love that binds...trust.

She holds him away a little, gently, looks him in the eye.

LUCY

Would you trust me...with Philly?

Alex has to pause, his emotions working hard.

20 INT. PONTIAC PARISIENNE 1970 - AFTERNOON 20

Cathy turns the center mirror, pretends to straighten her hair, bites her lip as she watches Alexander fade from her life. Jackson gives her a dirty look.

21 EXT. SERVICE STATION 1970 - DAY 21

As the Parisienne begins to burble away level Alexander walks towards the passenger window. He crosses behind in its wake. Alexander stands alone, silently watching, even after the big car disappears from sight.

22 INT. BROTHEL BEDROOM 2005 - NIGHT 22

Alex is dressed now and turns to leave. Lucy walks to the door with him, gives him a fleeting kiss on the cheek. He looks back as she holds his gaze momentarily, gives him that same look that Cathy gave him all those years before as the Parisienne pulled out of the Servo; a resigned sadness, a twitch of a smile, without any self pity.

23 INT. BROTHEL RECEPTION 2005 - NIGHT 23

He passes Madam, who looks at him with bright expectation.

MADAM

Everything good then eh?

Alex doesn't respond. Madam looks past him to an unseen Lucy, suddenly unconvinced.

24 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - NIGHT 24

Without warning Alex suddenly hauls the big car to a halt. Pissed-off, a CAR HORN blares, the Doppler effect slashes like a knife. Alex sits indecisive, engine idling.

Another car pulls up beside the idling Statesman. Unsettled now, Alex buzzes his window down; the VOICE hurls advice at him.

VOICE

Make your fucking mind up mate!

Alex mumbles; the Voice studies him for a moment, then disappears in an angry screech.

Alex decides, powering off with conviction.

25 INT. BROTHEL RECEPTION 2005 - NIGHT 25

Madam is counting out \$20s and \$50s into a pile. Lucy is focused on changing the SIM in her mobile phone.

MADAM

So it didn't happen? What now?

Lucy shrugs in resignation.

LUCY

Maybe up north...I was a dive instructor once...

Madam looks fondly at Lucy. Lucy discards a SIM CARD. She takes the cash from Madam and stuffs it into her bag with a disappointed smile. Lucy and the Madam embrace affectionately; it marks both an end and a beginning. Madam counsels Lucy tenderly.

MADAM

Cheer up! And don't look back!
You'll only have regrets!

26 EXT. BROTHEL 2005 - NIGHT 26

Alex wheels the Statesman in again at the brothel; he buzzes and is let in as before.

27 INT. BROTHEL RECEPTION 2005 - NIGHT 27

Alex comes bounding up the stairs. Madam is surprised, but doesn't dispense the usual warm greeting.

MADAM

Back again?

ALEX

Can I see Lucy again for a tic?

MADAM

She's gone. She only came tonight...to see you.

Alex is dumbstruck. He stares in a daze as Madam studies him, waiting for a response.

MADAM

She was hoping you'd ask.

ALEX

Ask?

MADAM

She was quitting. She thought you wanted to go on seeing her... outside...

Madam gestures broadly.

MADAM
...of this.

Alex is floored, says nothing, sags, wilts visibly.

MADAM
She thought you liked her?

ALEX
Can you call---

Madam cuts him off adamantly, then softens.

MADAM
I can't call her! New SIM card,
new number, new life...

Madam's voice trails off. She studies Alex intently, then scoops up the tiny SIM card and offers it to him; it glints golden, mocking him.

MADAM
Here...souvenir.

Alex nods, takes the SIM card like it was a lock of Lucy's hair. Madam's phone rings; she abandons Alex to answer it. Alex turns and slowly walks away. He is unavoidably privy to Madam's conversation; the trials of domesticity follow him out the door.

MADAM
Be quick! I'm at work!...there's
ice cream in the freezer...2ish
you'll have to ask your Dad about
that...and get off that computer!

28 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - NIGHT 28

Alex is sitting in his Statesman, staring at nothing. He takes a slow, deep breath and angrily punches an open hand with his fist. He watches a trickle of night people and lonely men; after awhile he starts the car and drives off.

29 INT. STATESMAN 2005 - AFTERNOON 29

Alex wheels up in front of his ex's house as before. Philly comes out with the same small duffel bag of clothes and piles into the car, slamming the door. Alex doesn't move. He drinks her in, as if seeing her for the first time. He makes no move to drive off. Philly gets out her iPod and throws him a look before prompting him to move.

PHILLY
Let's go!

Alex doesn't move. Philly looks down and spots the SIM card. She holds it up and studies it with curiosity.

PHILLY
Who's is this? You get a new phone?

ALEX
It's a keepsake. No.

Alex pauses, thinking, starts his pitch to Philly.

ALEX
How about we go on a road trip... somewhere?

Philly becomes curious.

PHILLY
A road trip?

Alex is dead calm happy, makes his pitch.

ALEX
We'll go cruising...go camping...places...where I used to work when I was sixteen....you can blow school!

PHILLY
What about Mum?

Alex shakes his head slowly and deliberately. Philly focuses on her father conspiratorially.

ALEX
Just you and me baby!

PHILLY
We could toast marsh mellows over a fire?

ALEX
We could do a lot of things!

Alex starts the car, glides away.

MUSIC begins.

Begin TITLE SEQUENCE

Reflections ripple across the windscreen: of neat suburban streets giving way to overpasses and highways. Soon they are replaced by an open landscape and passing scenes. Philly alternately gestures, feeds Alex a lolly, and sings noiselessly to her iPod. They drive until -

FADE TO BLACK THEN CREDITS